

AN

# HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

EARLY MOVEMENT IN ILLINOIS FOR THE  
LEGALIZATION OF SLAVERY,

READ AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE

CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

DECEMBER 5TH, 1864:

BY HON. WILLIAM H. BROWN,

EX-PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

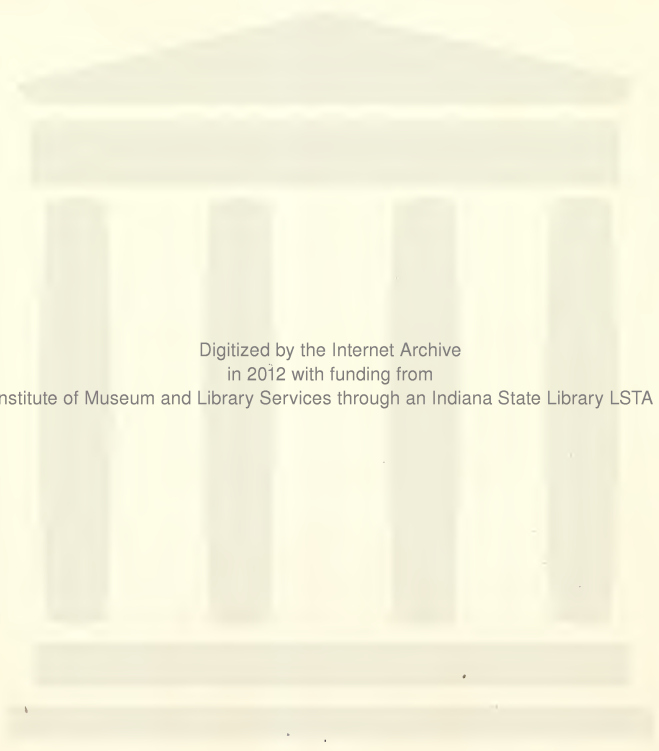
"Et Patribus et Posterati."



CHICAGO:

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CHICAGO: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1864.

DEAR SIR:

THE Address which the members of the Historical Society had the gratification of listening to last evening, prepared and delivered by yourself in compliance with the request of the Association, is a contribution to the history of our State too interesting and important not to have as wide a circulation and as enduring form as lie in the power of the Society to secure for it. The opening up of a historical fact so replete with interest, not only to the people of this State, but to the nation at large, has a special value at this time, when the consequences resulting from the institution of Slavery are developing themselves in a manner so convincing and so fearful. Had the accursed system been fastened at the time of which you treat upon this young Commonwealth, then just emerging into being, the results to us at the present time would have been such as the heart declines to consider, yet which are made but too evident and palpable by the desolate condition, the sad and pitiable spectacle, presented by our neighboring sister State of Missouri.

For the masterly manner in which you have uncovered and brought to light the machinations by which our noble State was brought into such imminent peril, and the happy though narrow escape it had, through a benign Providence, from the blight and

curse consequent upon the great, the almost national wrong, we desire to tender you our thanks.

As some slight testimonial of our appreciation of your instructive and interesting Address, we respectfully request a copy for publication under the auspices of the Society.

Very respectfully, yours, etc.,

MARK SKINNER,  
D. J. ELY,  
W. E. DOGGETT,  
EDWIN H. SHELDON,  
MAHLON D. OGDEN,  
WILLIAM BLAIR,  
WILLIAM BROSS,  
E. B. McCAGG,  
J. YOUNG SCAMMON,  
GEORGE F. RUMSEY,  
B. W. RAYMOND,  
BELDEN F. CULVER.

To Hon. WILLIAM H. BROWN.

## ADDRESS.

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SLAVERY has always been the disturbing element in our Government. Its recognition in the Constitution of 1787, by the equivocal language used therein, was the result of compromise, and an honest belief that in a short process of years it would wholly disappear. Its deadly leaven, even then, had corrupted, if not the whole lump, a large and influential portion of the inhabitants of the Southern States of the Union. In the North and East, as anticipated, Slavery soon ceased to exist; but elsewhere it took deeper root, and grew in strength and power, until it attempted its last crowning act of wickedness, the destruction of our free government.

No one can doubt the origin of the antagonism of the North and the South, an antagonism more intense and bitter than that of different nations and tongues. We were of the same stock, reared under the same government, educated by the same teachers, and imbued with the same ideas of politics and religion. Our pilgrim fathers, landing upon the inhospitable shores of New England, relied upon their strong arms and untiring industry for success. The ship that landed at Jamestown the first settlers of Virginia, brought also the curse which has since blighted the rich soil of that ancient Commonwealth. The freeman and the slave came together; and in two and a half centuries since these comparatively small events occurred — pregnant, indeed, with momentous consequences — each community has worked out its destiny. The freemen of the North and East, now united with the great and growing West, under the smiles of a Divine Providence, are this evening surrounded with every blessing which Christian civilization confers, undisturbed by “the rude alarms of war,” with plenty in our garner and prosperity in every department of life; while the soil of the South, polluted by the footsteps of the slave, is overrun by hostile armies, drenched in blood, and blackened and desolated by fire and sword.

The direct contest between freedom and slavery has been in progress in this country for nearly half a century. It was first aggressively developed in 1820-1, when application was made for the admission of Missouri into the Union. Her Constitution, as presented to Congress, legalized the existence of slavery within her borders. The excitement and agitation which it occasioned, not only in the halls of Congress, but throughout the entire country, is a matter of history. It was the second severe strain upon our National Government, and for a time threatened to break the cord which bound the States together. The South, as always upon the matter of Slavery, was a unit. The good and true men of the North determined to meet the question upon the threshold, and confine the evil to the States where it existed. Well would it have been for the present generation if success had crowned their efforts; but there were "dough-faces" then, as now; and the Missouri Compromise postponed the day of settlement to the present period. How that compromise was observed by one of the high contracting parties will also be a matter of history, when the sad story of Kansas and her wrongs shall have been written. We have heard of puny faith; but it is doubtful if such a breach



of common honesty, such a violation of solemn covenants, could ever have been fastened upon the Municipality of ancient Carthage.

This State was the theatre of the second aggressive movement of the Slave Power, in 1823-4. Your Society, Mr. President, have thought this an opportune time for a brief recital of the stirring events of those years, and have invited me, a spectator of, and a youthful participant in them, to make the attempted Convention of 1824 the subject of my remarks at this Annual Meeting. While it will only refresh the memories of the elder, the facts I propose to speak of will probably be new to some of your younger members, and to many of our friends of recent residence in our State, who honor us by their presence this evening.

The early settlements in the Territory of Illinois were confined to the three large rivers forming its eastern, western, and southern boundaries. The soil in the vicinity of these streams was unexampled for its richness and fertility. These locations were easy of access, and offered, through the river trade, a market for the surplus products of the first inhabitants. I do not recollect of any document determining the date of the first settlement of Illinois. Tradition fixes it at Cahokia, towards the



close of the seventeenth, or early in the commencement of the eighteenth century. The French inhabitants of Kaskaskia, in 1818, the year I made my residence there, claimed that their village was founded in 1707. There were evidences at that time (the remains of former edifices, among them the Jesuits' College,) that their chronology was substantially correct. It was admitted, however, that the settlement of Cahokia was some years earlier. This ancient village was located near the northern end of the American Bottom—a strip of land averaging four or five miles in width, commencing at Kaskaskia, and extending northward to a point a few miles above the mouth of the Missouri river. Its soil—originally a pure mould, the deposit of the large rivers in its vicinity, and occasionally overflowed, as in 1844, in its length and breadth—was rich beyond comparison, and inexhaustible in its power of production. A common field at Kaskaskia, composed of about six thousand acres, with an exterior fence only, had been cultivated from the first settlement of the place without science or skill, and with no regard to the rotation of crops; and yet in 1818, the soil was as fresh and vigorous as if the plowshare for the first time had passed through it. It was upon this tract of land

that the colonies of the Canadian French had been located, including the villages of Cahokia, Prairie du Pont, Prairie du Rocher and Kaskaskia.

There were but few settlements upon the eastern side of the State, or upon the Ohio border, until after the war of 1812. The Salt Springs, about fifteen miles north-west of Shawneetown, had been worked to some extent or some years before that period. They formed the nucleus of considerable neighborhoods in their vicinity, and were the source of an extensive business in that portion of the State. With the Kanawha Springs, in Kentucky, they furnished the early South-West with the indispensable article of salt.

There was nothing special to attract immigration to the Wabash Valley, or the more southern counties upon the Ohio, except a fertile soil and a facility for obtaining Government lands, which at the time, under the credit system, enabled the settler to secure one hundred and sixty acres of land by the payment of eighty dollars, with a credit of five years for the residue. The city of Cairo, at this early day, had "a local habitation and a name." It was assumed that it was to be the great city of the West, rivaling New Orleans, and outstripping St. Louis. It had, however, then, as now, no especial attraction

for the enterprising immigrant. During the few years before the organization of the State Government, there had been a moderate immigration passing the settlements upon the rivers, and forming new ones upon the beautiful prairies in the interior of the State.

The early inhabitants of Illinois were composed of the French Canadians, of whom I have spoken, and immigrants from Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina. The two latter States furnished but an indifferent article. They were the "poor whites" from a slaveholding population, occupying a low plane of civilization. They were credulous, ignorant and prejudiced. They had no use for the schoolmaster or the implements of his trade. The father had lived and died without the knowledge of letters, and why should not the son follow in his footsteps? and as to the daughter—the mother reproduced—her accomplishments commenced in dropping corn into the prepared furrow in the spring, and ended in the acquired knowledge of weaving linsey-woolsey in the fall—the article of dress for both sexes.\*

\* I was surprised, some six or eight years since, by an application for aid in the erection of a Female Seminary in the heart of "Egypt." I had some misgivings as to the success of such an enterprise, from the

The Kentucky population were of a far superior class. Though not highly cultivated or educated, as a general thing, all could read and write, and many of them afforded examples of manners and intelligence rarely found in older communities. A majority were conscientiously opposed to Slavery, and had made this State their residence because of its free Constitution. There were but comparatively few eastern settlers, and they were found in the Military Tract, and the then northern parts of the State.

That I may be better understood, I must digress still farther, and say that in 1822, there were no great political parties. Under Mr. Monroe's administration we enjoyed "an era of good feeling." The old Federal party had become extinguished through its opposition to the war with England, and the "high-minded" portion of it had become part and parcel of the triumphant democracy. Here, it was a question, apparently, whether the friends of Gov-

low appreciation of female education in that part of Illinois. It succeeded, however; and a stately brick edifice may be seen upon a prairie elevation, a few miles south of New Duquoin, a station upon the Illinois Central Railroad. The humanizing effect of this latter work, and the diffusion of light and education are made apparent in the improved social condition of the people, and the greatly increased loyal vote at the November election,

ernor Edwards or those of Governor Bond should fill the various offices of the county and State ; and yet, underlying these preferences, was the great question of Freedom and Slavery. Governor Edwards, though by birth a Southern man, and appointed from Kentucky as Governor upon the organization of the Territory, was yet in favor of a free Constitution for Illinois. Governor Bond and his supporters were *willing* certainly, if not desirous, that Slavery should be introduced among us. From subsequent experience, and the character of our population, I am constrained to believe that at the period of the adoption of the first Constitution Governor Bond's party was numerically the strongest. But in those days, before the pestiferous dogma of State Sovereignty was to any considerable extent promulgated, the Ordinance of 1787 was supposed to be a barrier to the introduction of Slavery into any part of the ceded territory. Even if it was not, the party feared the result of the agitation of this question in Congress, either in the defeat of the initiatory bill itself, or in the postponement of a State Government to an uncertain future. The admission of Missouri, in 1821, upon the famous Compromise, removing one of the difficulties out of the way,



encouraged the pro-slavery leaders to make another effort in furtherance of their favorite project.\*

I must also be permitted to allude to the financial condition of the West in 1822, as forming an important element in the politics of that period. In 1816, the States of Ohio and Kentucky were possessed with a mania for Banks. The Legislatures of these States, and especially Kentucky, chartered so large a number of these institutions, that in almost every village and hamlet was seen the word "Bank," in imposing capitals. Soon these Banks were put into operation, and paper money became abundant. Business revived to a wonderful extent; the price of every article of produce doubled in value; real estate sold at fabulous prices; town

\* Governor Bond was a native of Maryland, and came to Illinois about the time of the organization of the Territorial Government, and settled in what is now the County of Monroe. He was a plain, substantial farmer, of excellent common sense, but of limited education. It was conceded that his State papers were prepared by his Secretary of State, Mr. E. K. Kane. Many anecdotes in relation to him were current in the early years of the State Government, indicating that he had been what would now be called "a fast young man." He was about fifty years of age when he was elected Governor. Whatever may have been the follies of his youth, at that time he was a staid and sober gentleman, and exemplary in all the relations of life. In politics he was a partisan, ardent in his feelings, and somewhat vindictive to those who opposed him. He had represented his county in the Territorial Legislature, and the Territory as a delegate in Congress. He had also held the office of Receiver of Public Moneys at Kaskaskia. On assuming his gubernatorial duties he removed to Kaskaskia, the then seat of Government, and remained there until his death, which occurred some years ago.

sites were abundant, and town lots multiplied to an enormous figure. Poverty apparently fled the country, and wealth and affluence every where abounded.\*

In 1820, the bubble burst ;—the banks failed, and their notes were worthless. Immigration, which then afforded the only market, ceased, and many left the country. Those who remained, discouraged and dispirited, were patiently waiting for some change to better their condition. We had absolutely no currency in 1820–1, if what were called “sharp-shins” were left out of the account. These were made from a silver dollar, cut angularly into five quarters, or ten bits, or shillings.

\* When I left New York, in the fall of 1818, for the new State of Illinois, my father gave me a note of about eighty dollars against a recently-absconding debtor, saying that possibly, in my journey to this then far-distant land, I might meet his *quondam* client, and perhaps realize something upon his dishonored paper. The debtor was a millionaire at Shawneetown, and almost the first man I met upon my arrival at that town. His greeting was not extraordinarily cordial, until he learned that the *one* note constituted all his obligations in my possession, when his manner changed. His happiness upon meeting an old acquaintance so far from his former home was unbounded. Would he pay the note? Certainly he would, with a pleasure words could not express. His pockets, vest and pantaloons were filled with bank notes of high denominations, and he handed me a one hundred-dollar bank-bill upon some western bank, to liquidate the note and interest. His was not a singular case. Every man abounded in money, and this was indeed a great country!



In the winter of 1821-2, the first State Bank bill was passed, authorizing the issue of paper money based upon the credit of the State, which, like all credit in an insolvent community, was much below par. These bank-bills soon fell to thirty-three and one-third cents on the dollar—a three-dollar bill performing the office of a silver dollar, and a five-dollar bill pleasantly liquidating an indebtedness of one dollar and fifty cents. As a matter of course, under such a state of things, business of all kinds was brought almost to a close. The mechanic found no purchaser for his fabrics, and the produce of the farmer rotted upon his hands. Real estate, the former great staple of the country, was not only unsaleable, but had so depreciated in value, that a prudent man would scarcely take it as a gift. It is not surprising that many could be found, in such a community, the willing advocates of any measure that promised change, and perhaps relief.

Missouri was at that time settling with a class of respectable immigrants, mostly from Kentucky. They traversed the entire breadth of the State with their well-loaded teams, their flocks and herds, and man-servants and maid-servants. Could they not stop within our borders, and cultivate our rich

prairies, already prepared by aboriginal fires for the plow and harrow? It was just the population we needed, thought many; for with it came comparative wealth, and for the time being, consumers for the abundant products of our soil. One short article in our Constitution compelled this moving throng to pass our boundaries, and enrich (shall I say?) another Commonwealth.

Could this coveted population have looked through a vista of but forty short years, and read the history which may now be written of that State cursed by the Compromise of 1821, its wasted wealth, its desolated fields, and its murdered population, how gladly would the chains of the bondman have been broken, the relation of master and slave dissolved, and the free soil of Illinois selected as a residence and a home!

In this depressed condition of the country, the general election of 1822 occurred. Governor Bond's term of office was near its close, and four candidates were in the field to fill the coming vacancy. The first was Joseph Phillips, a former territorial Secretary, and then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. He was a native, I believe, of Tennessee, a man of very respectable talents and pleasing manners, and was the candidate of Governor Bond and his par-

tisans. The second was Thomas C. Browne, also a Judge of the Supreme Court, and known to many of the older members of the Bar. He was a resident of Shawneetown, and consequently expected to receive a large vote in that part of the State. He was understood to be the candidate of the friends of Governor Edwards. He was a Kentuckian by birth, but took no great, if any, interest in the slavery question. The third candidate was Edward Coles, Esq., a native Virginian. He had been the private Secretary of Mr. Madison, and a member of his family nearly the whole term of his presidency. Near its close, the President conferred upon Mr. Coles the appointment of Register of the Land Office at Edwardsville—an office, in those days, considered the best in the gift of the Government. Mr. Coles had visited Europe, had seen much of the world, and mingled in the best society. Upon his removal to this State, he brought with him his family of slaves, received by inheritance, and emancipated them in the county of Madison, giving them land, and stocking their several farms with the necessary implements of agriculture. A proceeding so rare, and a sacrifice, in 1820, so considerable, had given Mr. Coles a wide and favorable reputation. But he possessed none of

the characteristics of popularity. He was stiff and angular in his manners, with such a share of self-respect, as forbade him the use of means for obtaining votes then common with politicians. Indeed, he was the last man to be selected as an available candidate, and no one for a moment supposed he could be elected. General James B. Moore, the fourth candidate, was a plain, substantial man, a resident of the county of Monroe. He had acquired some celebrity, as a military man, in the frequent conflicts with the Indians during the war of 1812. He had also held several positions of trust under the Territorial and State Governments; and in all had so acquitted himself, as to obtain the confidence and regard of those with whom he was personally acquainted. But he was known to few beyond the Counties in his vicinity. He was also looked upon as a candidate without a chance for success. Messrs. Coles and Moore were literally independent candidates, neither expecting or deriving any aid from the prominent politicians of the day. The number of votes cast for Governor was 8,690. Of these Mr. Coles received 2,863, Judge Phillips 2,792, Judge Browne 2,444, and General Moore 631. Mr. Coles was therefore elected by a plurality vote, though in a minority of 5,827.

The Legislature met on the first Monday of December of that year. The roll of both houses, when examined in relation to the question of Slavery, disclosed the fact, that there was a decided majority of the members in opposition to the views of the Governor elect. Whether ignorant of this fact or not, at the time his message was prepared, the Governor placed himself in direct antagonism with the majority, and among other matters in his inaugural address, recommended the passage of a law liberating the slaves held by the French inhabitants, under, as they contended, the provisions of the cession of the North-West Territory by the State of Virginia, and recognized by the Constitution of 1818, in the peculiar language of the sixth article, declaring that "neither Slavery nor involuntary servitude shall *hereafter* be introduced into the State." The Governor also recommended the repeal of the disgraceful Black Code, which has occupied its place in our statute book since 1819, and which, I trust, at the coming session of the Legislature, will be expunged in lines blacker than the darkness of ancient or modern Egypt. The gauntlet thus thrown down was readily taken up; and then, for the first time, it appeared that a Legislature had been chosen to change the organic



law of the State. To accomplish this object but few votes, comparatively, were required from the northern counties.\* The south was largely preponderant in representation, and was always ready to vote for the introduction of Slavery. The question of a Convention had not been submitted to the people at the August election, nor had it been agitated in any form. A few designing men were doubtless in the secret; and by the concealment of their purpose and the adroitness of their management, had elected nearly a sufficient number of representatives to pass the Resolution required by the Constitution for its amendment.† The north, unaware of impending danger, had elected men who hesitated not to betray their constituents, and introduce among them an element of discord and contention. Madison had furnished one Senator, the late Judge T. W. Smith, and one Representative,

\* St. Clair, Madison, Bond and Fayette were then northern counties. Sangamon embraced almost all the territory now known as Northern Illinois.

† "Whenever two-thirds of the General Assembly shall think it necessary to alter or amend this Constitution, they shall recommend to the electors, at the next election of members of the General Assembly, to vote for or against a Convention; and if it shall appear that a majority of all the citizens of the State, voting for representatives, have voted for a Convention, the General Assembly shall, at their next session, call a Convention \* \* for the purpose of revising, altering or amending this Constitution."—*Constitution of 1818, Art. 7.*

Emanuel J. West, leaders in their respective houses, neither of whom could have been elected to vote for a Convention. St. Clair, always a strong anti-slavery county, was also misrepresented by a Senator, the late William Kinney, and a Representative in the person of a little Frenchman by the name of Trotier. Green and Washington counties were also misrepresented in the House of Representatives.

At this session an United States Senator was to be elected in the place of Jesse B. Thomas, whose term of office was about expiring. He was a candidate for re-election, and was opposed by Governor John Reynolds, now of Belleville. The latter was supported by most of the friends of Governor Edwards; not, perhaps, from any regard for that gentleman or his principles, but from a very strong antipathy to Judge Thomas. There was also a contested election - case from the representative district composed of the counties of Pike and Fulton, Nicholas Hansen having the certificate, and John Shaw claiming the seat. Hansen would vote for Thomas, and Shaw for Reynolds. The matter was referred to the Committee on Elections, composed of a majority of the friends of Judge Thomas, on the first days of the session, who reported in favor of Hansen, and Shaw took his departure for



his residence, in Pike county. The election for Senator took place on the 11th of January, and Judge Thomas was elected, Hansen voting for him.

At this period of the session, the Convention question was paramount to all other business before the Legislature. Everything was shaped to effect its final success. Local bills, in which individual members were interested, and upon the passage of which their political life depended, were unceremoniously laid upon the table, or held in the hands of committees, until the refractory or doubtful member yielded to the pressure. Offices in the gift of that body were held in abeyance, and promises of political preferment to those who sought distinction were abundant. Those who opposed the favorite measure were threatened and denounced. Legislative despotism ruled supreme; and the co-ordinate branches of the Government, for the time being, were merged in the unlimited power exercised by the Senate and House of Representatives.

In the absence of principle there is always an absence of confidence; and though the Convention men were tolerably sure of a constitutional majority in both houses, they justly feared that some of the purchased or involuntary members might fail them

in the hour of trial. The Legislature at that time consisted of eighteen Senators and thirty-six Representatives. A two-thirds vote, therefore, required twelve Senators and twenty-four Representatives. The Senate were decided, but the House wavered. It was therefore determined to pass the Convention resolution by a *joint vote* of the two houses — the large majority of the Senate supplying the deficiency in the House. The Senate accordingly resolved, that if two-thirds of all the members of the General Assembly should recommend to the people to vote for or against a Convention at the next election, it would be in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution. It was passed by a vote of twelve to six. Mr. Field, of Union, subsequently introduced a similar resolution in the House; but, to the astonishment of many, it was defeated by a vote of twenty to sixteen.

The Convention Resolution passed the Senate by a clear two-thirds majority, but was prudently retained until a sure majority could be procured for its passage through the House. The manager in the latter body, Mr. West, of Madison, like a prudent general, was unwilling to incur any risk; and to ascertain the real strength of the party, on the 26th of January caused a resolution similar to that passed

by the Senate to be introduced into the House, which obtained twenty-two votes only, Hansen voting for it; one was held in reserve—Mr. Rattan, of Green, who voted with the anti-conventionists to move a reconsideration, if necessary. But one vote, therefore, was to be secured to effect the real object in view. Mr. McFatridge, of Johnson county,\* who had theretofore voted with the anti-conventionists, as the ayes and noes afterwards disclosed, fell a victim to the seductions of Messrs. West and company, and was induced, for some consideration, to change his vote, and go over to the other party.

On the 11th of February the Senate's resolution was put upon its final passage; and now the labor of weeks was to be realized, hope to become fruition, the long night succeeded by a bright and joyful

\* Mr. McFatridge was, I judge, of Scotch-Irish origin, a man about sixty years of age, of kind heart and generous disposition. He had fallen into the very general evil of the times, and drank more liquor than his legislative duties actually required. Late in an afternoon session, a member moved an adjournment. Mr. McF., *in his chair*, opposed it. It was carried by a large vote, and the Speaker declared the House adjourned. McFatridge, raising his voice above the noise occasioned by the general movement, exclaimed: "Mr. Speaker—Mr. Speaker,—you may adjourn the House, and be hanged; but old Billy McFatridge will remain in session until sundown, and look after the interests of his constituents, while you and the rest of you are '*cur-vorting*' at Capp's grocery, and getting drunk upon the hard earnings of the people!"

day, and the "winter of their discontent made glorious summer" by a two-thirds vote. Alas! the uncertainty of human calculations, as well as the uncertainty of human legislators! Upon this vote, to the utter consternation and dismay of the Conventionists, Hansen deserted them, and voted against the resolution! It was lost for the want of a constitutional majority of twenty-four votes. So sure were the party of success, that no one of their number had been detailed to give a negative vote. The resolution was lost beyond the reach of reconsideration. Ordinary men would have yielded to a defeat so clear and unequivocal; but these men were made of "sterner stuff." A member who had voted for the resolution, and of course in the constitutional minority, moved a reconsideration of the vote. The Speaker, a thorough Convention man, promptly, and correctly decided that the motion was out of order. An appeal was taken from his decision, and sustained by the House by a vote of eighteen to sixteen.

The session had already been protracted to its usual length. The introduction of new business had been prohibited after the last day of January, and in ordinary circumstances the Legislature would have adjourned on the following day. The session

was continued, however, until the 18th of February, seven days after the memorable defeat.

A messenger was immediately dispatched to recall John Shaw, who resided over one hundred and thirty miles from the seat of Government. This journey, going and returning, would ordinarily occupy five full days. By a relay of horses it might be made in four. In the meantime the House reconsidered the election case of Hansen and Shaw, reviewed the testimony upon which it had originally been decided on the first days of the session, and came to the conclusion that during this long time they had been in error; that Shaw really was, and Hansen was not, entitled to the seat, and so Hansen was turned out and Shaw admitted. Whatever may have been the real merit of this controversy, or whoever may have been entitled to the disputed seat, disinterested observers were heard to say, that when the eleven members of the House who voted on the first trial of the case in favor of Hansen wanted his vote for Judge Thomas, they were of one opinion; but when they failed to receive it for the Convention Resolution, they were decidedly of another and different one. Perhaps the House, in these more latter days, may have had other and more convincing testimony



than that before them at the commencement of the session. They had it. A resident of Pike county, a strong political friend of the originally excluded member, being then at Vandalia, made a solemn affidavit that *in his opinion* Shaw received a greater number of legal votes than were given to Hansen. Could doubts exist in the minds of these eleven consistent men after the introduction of evidence so clear and conclusive !\*

Mr. Shaw being in his seat, the House now re-considered the vote upon the appeal from the Speaker's decision. One of the constitutional minority then moved to re-consider the vote by which the resolution had been lost a few days before, which of course succeeded ; and by the aid of John Shaw the House concurred with the Senate in the passage of the Convention resolution, and the great object of the session was accomplished.

But who was this Mr. Hansen, who figured so conspicuously in the Legislature of 1822-3 ? He was from Albany or its vicinity, of native Dutch descent, and a graduate of Union College. A young

\* The following members of the House voted that Hansen *was* entitled to the disputed seat, at the commencement of the session, and that he *was not*, near its close, viz : Alexander, of Pope, Campbell, Daimwood, Davenport, Dorris, Emmitt, Ford, Logan, McFerron, West and Will.

man, just admitted to the Bar of New York, he removed to Atlas, then the County-seat of Pike County, and commenced the practice of Law. As his morals and habits were tolerably respectable, he might have succeeded in his profession, and become a useful member of society. In an evil hour he became a candidate for the Legislature, and received his certificate of election. Whether or not he was the victim of circumstances, or was made the cat-spaw of designing men, he seemed to be conscious of the equivocal position he occupied, and after his ejection from his seat, a sadder, but perhaps a wiser man, he returned to his place of residence, closed up his business, and bade a long farewell to his adopted State.

The victory thus obtained by the Convention members of both houses, and their hangers-on, was appropriately celebrated on the evening of the memorable day. A grand procession was formed, headed by men high in office; and thoroughly stimulated with whiskey, took up its line of march. The shouts and yells of the excited multitude were intermingled with loud blasts upon tin horns, and what music could be educed from kettles and pans lustily beaten with iron or wood. Night was made hideous, timid females were alarmed, and stout men



could not foresee the finale of the drunken revels. The procession particularly visited the residences of the Governor and Anti-Convention members of the Senate and House, and saluted them with groans of derision, accompanied with their delectable music. At a late hour, without doing any material damage, the procession dissolved into its original elements, partly from the impossibility of maintaining any particular line of march, as to some of its members, and absolutely no line at all on the part of the great majority. The demonstration was intended for effect abroad. It is certain its effects were anything but favorable at home.

On the day succeeding the adjournment, a meeting of the principal Anti-Slavery men, then at Vandalia, was held at the Governor's room, to consult upon the course to be adopted in view of the late action of the Legislature. The prospect was one of gloom. The powers of darkness seemed to be in the ascendancy; and from the noise and clamor at the seat of government, and the bold assertions of the majority, based, as they pretended, upon reliable information from their respective Counties, the vast majority of the people were apparently in favor of a Convention. The stake was too large to be yielded without vigorous effort;

and it was determined to effect an organization, and make a sturdy fight. Money was raised, committees appointed, and measures taken to call out and concentrate the strength of the Anti-Slavery party.

The struggle which now commenced, and was continued through the succeeding eighteen months, was one of no ordinary character. Our previous elections had been conducted with warmth and zeal; but into this canvass was infused a bitterness and malignity which the agitation of the Slavery question only engenders. Why it always produces this result, is worthy of the investigation of the moralist and philosopher. Other great evils, political or moral, are discussed with freedom, and measures for their amelioration or prevention meet with no outward opposition: but call in question the right of one man to enslave another, or even make an effort to confine this gigantic sin to the territory in which it exists, and the fiercest passions are aroused in the hearts of its advocates, and the lack of power alone saves their opponents from utter destruction.

In this spirit was the contest of 1823-4 waged. Old friendships were sundered, families divided, and neighborhoods arrayed in opposition

to each other. Threats of personal violence were frequent, and personal collisions of common occurrence. As in time of warfare, every man expected an attack, and was prepared to meet it. Pistols and dirks were in great demand, and formed a part of the personal habiliments of all those conspicuous for their opposition to the Convention measure. Even the gentler sex came within the vortex of this whirlwind of passion; and many were the angry disputations of those whose cares and interests were usually confined to their household duties.

Of the five newspapers then printed in the State, two were selected to advocate the cause of freedom, the "Edwardsville Spectator," and the "Illinois Gazette." The first was located, as its name indicates, at Edwardsville, in Madison County, and was owned and edited by the late Hooper Warren. This was decidedly the best and most influential newspaper in the State. Mr. Warren was a printer by trade, and probably had received but little more than a common-school education. He was, however, a man of considerable attainments, clear intellect, and of inflexible purpose. His editorial articles were prepared with skill and ability, though it is said they were

seldom put upon paper. His own compositor, his ideas, clothed in pure English, proceeded directly from his brain to his type, and reached the public eye without material correction. His paper, from the care and labor bestowed upon it, had obtained an extensive circulation, and exerted a great influence upon the minds of its readers. The "Gazette" was published at Shawneetown, and edited by the late Henry Eddy, a native of New England, and a lawyer of good standing. Both of these newspapers did good service in the contest, and contributed greatly to the ultimate success of the cause.

The opposite party availed themselves of the "Republican Advocate," a newspaper also printed at Edwardsville, under the control and direction of the late Judge Smith, and E. J. West; and also the "Illinois Republican," a journal established for the occasion, at Kaskaskia, by Gov. Bond and his party. It had no ostensible publisher or editor. It was understood that the late E. K. Kane, afterwards a senator in Congress, was at the head of the editorial staff.

The "Illinois Intelligencer" was printed at the seat of Government, and was owned by a Mr. Berry and myself. Berry was a member of

the House of Representatives, and had voted for the Convention resolution. The number published immediately after the passage of the Convention measure gave an unvarnished statement of the late extraordinary legislative proceedings, and some severe strictures upon the conduct of the majority. A proof sheet having in some way escaped from the office, disclosing the contents of the forthcoming number, unsuccessful efforts were made through Mr. Berry, and by threats of the destruction of the office, to suppress that edition of the paper. By the aid of armed men, the office remained intact, and the paper was duly published. The election of public printers had purposely been delayed to that late period of the session, and of course I was defeated, though Mr. Berry, with a Mr. Blackwell, was elected.

My position, with such a partner, was as unpleasant as it must have been unprofitable to the cause in which the friends of freedom were about to embark. Upon consultation with Gov. Coles and others, it was thought advisable that I should accept a favorable offer from Mr. R. Blackwell for my interest in the office, and trust to the future to regain the possession of the paper. In the fall of 1823, a vacancy occurring



in the office of Secretary of State, the late David Blackwell, the brother of my assignee, was appointed to fill the vacancy; and through executions then issued against Berry, the new Secretary soon acquired his property in the office, and with the consent of his partner, changed the politics of the paper; and until the day of election it ceased not to advocate the great interests of the State by its decided opposition to the Convention measure.

In addition to the newspaper press, pamphlets and handbills in great variety and in great numbers, were printed and circulated among the reading classes, setting forth the evils of Slavery, and demonstrating, in the light of political economy, the advantages of free labor over that of a servile race. The moral and religious bearings of the question of Slavery were mainly committed to the clergymen of that day, as being peculiarly within their province. These were often presented, and pressed upon the conscience with power and effect.

Among those who supported the Convention, as a general thing, were the rank and file of the politicians of the State. Of these must be excepted a few such men as Daniel P. Cook, Judge

Pope and Gov. Edwards, even, who, according to my recollection, was absent from the State, and took no part in the controversy. These politicians were dangerous opponents, because, long engaged in the struggles for power and office, they were practiced leaders, and familiar with all the means and appliances for success with the people. With them, were the men of wrecked fortunes and loose principles,—as also the young, aspiring and ambitious, misled by the loud boasting and extravagant calculations of the party, supposing that the great majority was upon that side. The French population also, to secure more perfectly their supposed rights to the people of color then held by them in bondage, were the natural allies of the Conventionists, and desirous of their success. To these may be added, with very few exceptions, the “poor whites” from the Slave States, the most vociferous and malignant of all. Their poverty and shiftlessness precluded the possibility of their becoming slaveholders if the Constitution should be changed. Their toil and zeal could only be accounted for upon the supposition that they desired a class of humanity among us more debased and ignorant than themselves.



Gov. Coles was the admitted leader of the Anti-Convention party. With him were associated men of intellect and character, but they were unused to the conflicts of party, and were but indifferent leaders. The great man of the day, it may now be said, was the Rev. John M. Peck, D. D., a Baptist minister, who came to the West in 1816. He was a man of diversified talents, and like many others of his eastern brethren, could turn them to a good account in more ways than one. His plan of organizing the Counties by a central committee, with branches in every neighborhood, was carried out by his own exertions and personal supervision, and was greatly instrumental in saving the State. Being an agent of the American Bible Society, his duties frequently led him to Egypt and elsewhere,—and he doubtless performed the double duty of disseminating the Holy Scriptures and correct principles at one and the same time. Though he was ardent in the advocacy of every question, in the correct decision of which he considered the people had a deep interest, and placed himself in the fore-front of all the moral reforms of his day, he yet retained a strong hold upon the affections of all classes. As a preacher he had no superior, and his piety

was never questioned. He died a few years ago, lamented by all who knew him.

Men who had some interest in the property of the country were Anti-Conventionists, and especially those who had chosen a residence in Illinois because of its free Constitution. They had expected to live and die upon the soil they had opened, and leave it as an inheritance to their children. The agitation of this question had rendered every thing uncertain and valueless. Where should they go, if Slavery were to be let in upon them? The four new States on our north and west, now the strongholds of freedom, were then in the possession of the wandering savage; and Michigan was but little in advance of her after-born sisters.

The Protestant Church in all its denominations, though divided in forms and doctrines, was united upon this vital question. Its members, active and diligent, labored to convince their Convention neighbors of the error of their views, and to bring them over to the right side, and its ministers were heard not only in the pulpit, but upon the stump; and their influence then (as it ever ought to be upon great moral questions) was felt and acknowledged.

Thus arrayed, both parties went into the elec-

tion of 1824 with tolerable confidence of success. Both were astonished at the result ; for a majority of 1,834 out of a vote of 11,764—nearly three-fifths against calling a Convention—was much larger than was expected by the Anti-Conventionists, while the other party had strong hopes of carrying the measure.

As it will be interesting to the politician to locate the vote just stated, I will say that the following Counties voted for the Convention, viz: Alexander, Fayette, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Jackson, Jefferson, Pope, Randolph, Wayne, and White—eleven Counties out of twenty-nine then organized. Sangamon was then the northern County. Its settlements did not extend twenty miles north of Springfield, and there were no inhabitants beyond, except an Indian agency near Elkhart, and a few traders at Fort Clark, now Peoria.

I might be unjust to some living or dead, and indeed to history itself, should I fail to state in this place, that some of the advocates of the Convention measure disclaimed as their object, the introduction of Slavery into this State. The newspapers under the control of the party never openly advocated or disavowed it; but it was al-


ways charged by their opponents that this was their sole design. No different conclusion can now be reached upon a fair review of the events of those years. The State Government under the Constitution had been in operation but about four years; and sufficient time had not elapsed to test its excellences or defects. It was sufficiently democratic to suit the most fastidious taste, even had that taste been refined and sublimated by modern demagogues. The provision creating a Council of Revision was the only feature seriously and continuously denounced; and yet these declaimers against the Council of Revision were the persons who procured its engraftment into that instrument. No one, it is believed, can account for the revolutionary proceedings of the Legislature to get the question before the people, and the herculean efforts afterwards put forth to ensure its success, upon the supposition that some trivial amendments only were contemplated.

The truth is, Slavery, in its perfect deformity, stood boldly forth in the contest. It made a powerful effort to invade the State, but was driven back. As the results of this struggle, we have a rich, prosperous and free State, and a hardy, industrious and free population. Our free

institutions, protected from the assaults of 1824, have given us enterprise and intelligence, unlocked the sources of our wealth, built up cities and towns, created a commerce upon our lakes equal to that of the ocean, diffused the blessings of free education, reared temples of religion, preserved to us a pure gospel, and opened up a future of hope and promise.

SENATORS AND MEMBERS OF  
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMPOSING THE LEGISLATURE OF 1822-3.

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 Those printed in small capitals voted against the Convention Resolution.

SENATORS.

ADOLPHUS F. HUBBARD, Lieut. Governor and Presiding Officer.

THOMAS LIPPINCOTT, Secretary.

Sangamon—	Wayne and Lawrence—
STEPHEN STILLMAN.	WILLIAM KINKADE.
Madison—	Green, Morgan, etc.—
Theophilus W. Smith.	GEORGE CADWELL.
Washington—	White—
ANDREW BANKSON.	Leonard White.
Union and Alexander—	Edwards—
John Grammer.	ROBERT FRAZIER.
Crawford, Clark and Edgar—	Johnson and Franklin—
DANIEL PARKER.	Milton Ladd.
Hamilton, Jefferson and Marion—	St. Clair—
Thomas Sloo, Jr.	William Kinney.
Bond, Fayette and Montgomery,	Monroe—
Martin Jones.	Joseph A. Beard.
Jackson—	Gallatin—
William Boon.	Michael Jones.
Randolph—	Pope—
Samuel Crozier.	Lewis Barker.



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.  
 WILLIAM M. ALEXANDER, of Alexander, Speaker.  
 CHARLES DUNN, Clerk.

Monroe—	William Alexander.	Johnson—	William McFatrige.
Pope—	Samuel Alexander, James A. Whiteside.	Pike and Fulton—	Nicholas Hansen.*
Madison—	CURTISS BLAKEMAN, GEORGE CHURCHILL, Emanuel J. West.	Clark and Edgar—	WILLIAM LOWREY.
Fayette and Montgomery—	William Berry.	St. Clair—	RISDON MOORE, JACOB OGLE, James Trotier.
Lawrence—	Abraham Cairns.	Randolph—	THOMAS MATHER, RAPHAEL WIDEN, John McFerron.
Hamilton, Jefferson and Marion—	Zadock Casey.	Bond—	JNA. H. PUGH.
Franklin—	Thomas Dorris.	Edwards—	GILBERT T. PELL.
Gallatin—	J. G. Daimwood, James S. Davenport.	Green and Morgan—	Thomas Kattan.
White—	JOHN EMMITT, Alexander Phillips, G. R. Logan.	Washington—	James Turney.
Crawford—	DAVID MCGAHEY, R. C. Ford.	Jackson—	Conrad Will.
Union—	Alexander P. Field, John McIntosh.	Sangamon—	JAMES SIMS.
		Wayne—	James Campbell.

\* Shaw, substituted for Hansen, voted for the Convention Resolution.

VOTE OF COUNTIES FOR AND AGAINST  
THE CONVENTION RESOLUTION.

COUNTIES.	For.	Ag't.	COUNTIES.	For.	Ag't.
Alexander.....	75	51	Lawrence .....	158	261
Bond .....	63	240	Madison.....	351	563
Clark .....	31	116	Marion.....	45	52
Crawford.....	134	262	Montgomery.....	74	90
Edgar.....	3	234	Monroe.....	141	196
Edwards.....	189	391	Morgan .....	42	455
Fayette .....	125	121	Pike....	23	261
Franklin.....	170	113	Pope.....	273	124
Fulton .....	5	60	Randolph.....	357	284
Gallatin.....	596	133	Sangamon.....	153	722
Greene.....	135	405	St. Clair.....	427	543
Hamilton.....	173	85	Union.....	213	240
Jackson.....	180	93	Washington.....	112	173
Jefferson.....	99	43	Wayne.....	189	111
Johnson.....	74	74	White.....	355	326

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